

Duxbury Clipper

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ALDEN HOUSE

DUXBURY HISTORY FILE REFERENCE

IT WILL BECOME A MUSEUM

In Elise Lathrop's "Historic Houses of Early America," written in 1927, we read:

"The home of John and Priscilla Alden stands close to the electric railway in Duxbury, in plain sight from it and from the highroad.

"John and Priscilla were married in 1623, but they came to this house, which was built for them by their third son, Jonathan, only after the first cabin home burned. Although not the original home that Alden built for his bride, the lines from the poem describe it almost equally well: 'Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn, from the firs of the forest.'

"It has always been owned in the family, and at present, Mr. John Alden of Hyde Park, Massachusetts, holds it on a twenty years' lease.

"He is an enthusiastic collector of antiques, and has loaned many beautiful pieces of furniture, china, pewter, old ornaments, etc., which add greatly to the interior. A few original articles also remain, such as the old corded bed in which the first couple slept, and in which both John and Priscilla died."

John and Priscilla, when they first came to Duxbury from Plymouth, settled on land near the tidal head of Bluefish River in the section we call Millbrook. On a knoll near Eagletree Pond he built a cabin. The plaque on the stone marker reads: "Site of John Alden House Built 1627." The present structure, which is the third homestead, is west of the original, and is off Alden St. Dated 1653, it is owned by The Alden Kindred of America, who hold their annual meeting there on July 28. (There are about 300 present members, who pay annual dues of \$2).

Except for a few items owned by the Alden Kindred, all the furnishings and furniture in the John Alden House belong to the Bessie L. Alden estate. The heirs are Priscilla Alden, Washington, D. C.; Charles Alden, Jr., Wellesley, executor; his brother Arthur, manager of the estate, operator of the gift shop, (he is vice-president of Alden Kindred); Priscilla Alden Evans, Palo Alto, Cal.; Rachel Alden Patterson, Clearwater, Fla.; Esther Hansen, Needham, and Myles Standish Alden, Middleboro.

Charles L. Alden, Jr., is the son of the former treasurer of the Alden Kindred who collected antiques for the homestead. The Alden Kindred bought the house when it was falling into disrepair and leased it to members of the Alden family. The lease ran out Oct. 1, and now all contents not owned by Alden Kindred are to be offered for auction.

There have been other auctions at the homestead, and many valuable period pieces have long since been sold. Chauncy Davis was auctioneer a score of years ago when a visitor remarked, "Why did they build such a historic house so near the railroad tracks?" The auctioneer half a dozen years ago was Ed Burbank. Some valuable antiques remain, but the Alden Kindred, feeling the price set on them by appraisers was excessive, refused to buy them. When we asked one Alden heir whether any of the remaining items actually belonged to the original John Alden we were told there were three: A mortar and pestle, a bedstead John made for his grandchildren and a Duncan Phyfe table! Surprising news, since Duncan Phyfe lived from 1768 to 1864.

We then conferred with officers of Alden Kindred of America, including one who served as president for six years. They have encouraging news for Duxbury. Its historic shrine will not only remain, but will be repaired, refurbished and refurbished. "We have our eye on a cradle that belonged to John and Priscilla and on other authentic 17th century pieces. The homestead, instead of being operated on a commercial basis, will become a museum which, over the years, will be furnished with Alden history in mind."

We can trust the Alden Kindred of America to keep green the memory of John Alden, who with Myles Standish, is sometimes said to have "founded" Duxbury. (P.S. There is no historical basis for the tale of John's proposal to Priscilla Mullens on behalf of Captain Standish as narrated in Longfellow's "The Courtship of Myles Standish." John Alden, signer of the Mayflower Compact, Deputy from and treasurer of Duxbury, became Governor's assistant and Deputy governor before he died in 1687. He was one of the outstanding Pilgrims to make the first trip on the Mayflower.)